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ADVOCATE OF PEACE.

FEBRUARY, 1856.

THE TRUE COURSE OF PEACE.

IN our number of the Advocate for December, we intimated our reliance on the purified Church of Christ to break the sword of war; but in the present condition and character of that Church in Europe, we can indulge but little expectation that it can be brought to conform its teachings, in this respect, to those of its acknowledged Head; and no method was distinctly pointed out by which these teachings could be practically applied to war. It might be understood from that article, that we believed that the mere preaching of pacific Christianity from our pulpits would be all sufficient to put an end to that tremendous evil; but this is not our view. The doctrine of the contrariety of war to Christianity is indeed a requisite one, but only the first step; and, in the delinquency of established churches, has already been urged to a considerable extent by the friends of peace. If every Christian, in every land, was deeply impressed with all the horrors and all the criminality of war, a practical method must still be sought, by which that atrocious custom could be abolished.

In our last number for January, after showing from the occurrence of the present war that the methods hitherto taken by the friends of peace are not only ineffectual but hopeless, we promised to indicate another, which we consider more reliable; and we now resume the subject to redeem this promise. Let it be understood, however, that we do not say that all the expositions hitherto made by peace societies and others have been useless; on the contrary, we believe they have vastly modified the sentiments of Christendom on the subject of war, and laid a wide basis on which our more practical measures can be erected; but we say we have not yet rightly understood, or properly assailed, an obstacle, the removal of which is essential to success.

We indicate this fatal obstacle simply by calling attention to the fact of the immense armies maintained by civilized nations, even in time of peace, and which are of course vastly augmented at the commencement of war; we do not recommend a protest against this mere fact as a novelty; we are well aware that denunciations of these establishments have been abundantly

made, in full peace conventions and numerous peace publications; but they have been ever viewed as instruments, rather than as sources of war; it has ever been supposed that their reduction would be the natural consequence of such international compacts as have been urged for the preservation of peace, and accordingly no practical measure has been attempted or even proposed for their abolition, by the friends of peace. It is true, that strong protests have been made against the militia system in the United States, and against that of recruiting in Great Britain, and, as far as they go, have produced a favorable effect in the reduction of military establishments; but the imagined necessity of these establishments for safety, in nations comparatively free, and the coercive enforcement of them in those of despotic character, have hitherto rendered nugatory all endeavors to abolish them entirely; something more than such remonstrances is requisite: we have not yet gone to the root of the evil.

Before any measure can be devised, or any serious efforts made, for the abolition of military forces, we must come to the earnest conviction that these forces are the chief and most essential source from whence war springs. We know that there are plausible reasons, or rather pretences, often assigned as causes of war; and we are well aware that more real motives exist in the corrupt ambition or personal interests of rulers and statesmen: we perceive also, that war is sometimes precipitated by the excited pride or passion of a community, generated by political delusion; but we maintain that none of these motives, nor all combined, would ever lead to war: that no martial gratification of them would ever for a moment be thought of, were it not for the presence of a military power, by which, in national pride, it is believed they could be irresistibly enforced. The remark of Jefferson is as true politically, as philosophically, that a people feeling power forget right; none but strong men venture to give perpetual insults to others; in international controversies no weak nation has ever insisted on unreasonable concessions from a strong one; but first rate powers, as they are called, ever meet the weaker and each other, not in the spirit of the Christian, but that of the bully. In the various collisions always incident to international policy, to expect universal and permanent peace while the instruments of war are abundantly at hand, is as unreasonable as it would be to rest in fearless safety where fire was carried through barrels of gunpowder. The various appeals made by peace societies to rulers, churches and people, to preclude the occurrence of war, by petitions, congresses, negotiations, pledges of arbitration, &c., are ineffectual, because they presuppose a sincere desire in all the parties to settle their disputes pacifically, which is but seldom the case. There is nothing to induce unprincipled governments to refrain from hostile aggressions but the want of power; take away that power in their armies, and we ensure the reign of peace.

If this position is allowed, we now arrive at the question, how shall we proceed to abolish these military establishments. In the first place we must lay down the firm proposition, from which we must not shrink, that not only

the actual conduct of war, but that all preparations for it, are sinful; sinful in the private soldier, whether of a regular army or militia, who accepts enlistment and shoulders his musket in token that he is ready to commit homicide for his government; sinful in the officer who directs his movements; sinful in the sovereign executive, who governs the military establishments; sinful in every legislator who gives his vote to ordain it, or to make appropriations for it; sinful in all who engage in the manufacture or sale of arms, or who assist in the construction of fortresses or ships of war, or the erection and conduct of military schools; and that however multiplied to this responsibility for sin, it is not thereby lessened to any individual; each participator bears the whole weight of the culpability; no one can divest himself of it by throwing it upon others. Here we have certainly an abundance of sinners in all countries, almost enough to justify the doctrine of total depravity; and hence our proposition may be deemed extravagant, perhaps fanatical, but nothing short of this will fully conform to the radical injunctions of Christ; nothing short will give the impulse to which military establishments can be successfully assailed. Let it be understood, that any preparation or demonstration of a military nature, may be innocently made, under any pretence, and the door will be opened to the most extensive and mischievous military establishments.

To abandon or compromise, in any degree, the position we have now laid down, we must disclaim the fundamental principles maintained by peace societies; for it is logically deducible from those principles in all its fulness. If war is incompatible with the Gospel, as all such societies maintain, it is of course sin; and if the killing of men in war is murder, as many of us must consistently hold, it is then an atrocious crime, aggravated by the magnitude of its scale. But to prepare for the commission of a crime, with a signified readiness for it, is as criminal as the actual perpetration, for the criminality lies in the intention; and all who participate in such preparation participate in the guilt, even if they have no design to participate in the criminal action. This is not only the maxim of common sense but of common law, which always holds an accessory before the fact of a murder, as guilty as the murderer. If all the originators of a crime were absolved, but the one who was made the instrument of its commission, the ends of justice and the supposed safety of the community would be but imperfectly secured; and, in like manner, if none but actual warriors are censured by the friends of peace for war, their crimes will ever be covered by the alleged innocence of its projectors.

If we have succeeded in establishing the propositions, that martial preparations are the true sources of war, and criminal in all who aid in promoting them, our next step is to point out the method by which the friends can aim at abolishing all these institutions; but as we have fully covered all the space now appropriated to this article, we must defer to our next number the completion of the subject.